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SUBJECT: JAN 27 US STATEMENT AT UNSC BRIEFING ON GAZA

¶1. (U) This is an action message. USUN is authorized to draw from points in para 2 below following the UNSC Briefing by USG/ECR John Holmes on the Humanitarian Situation in Gaza.

¶2. (U) I thank Under-Secretary General Holmes and Commissioner-General AbuZayd for their recent trip and for their insightful briefing on the current humanitarian situation in Gaza.

The United States welcomes the cease-fire in Gaza and deeply appreciates the efforts of international and regional partners, in particular the important role of the Government of Egypt.

The United States looks forward to Egypt's continued efforts towards a broader peace through a commitment to end smuggling from within its borders.

The United States wishes to express its profound appreciation to the UN agencies, including the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and other international and non-governmental organizations for their tireless dedication in providing critical humanitarian assistance under extremely difficult circumstances. Your efforts to rescue the wounded, to provide shelter for the displaced, and to distribute food to the hungry mitigated the human toll of this conflict. The United States recognizes those efforts came at the high cost of the lives of nine UN staff and contractors and I want to express our deepest condolences.

First and foremost, the United States remains extremely concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza. The relief, recovery, and reconstruction needs remain great and will require the attention and action of all in the international community to provide the needed assistance to the people of Gaza. The regular and controlled flow of assistance and humanitarian staff into Gaza will be an important part of addressing the enormous humanitarian needs of Gazans.

In addition to the almost \$600 million the United States provided in assistance to Palestinians in 2008, including \$185 million for UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East operations, we provided \$85 million to UNRWA in late December to support UNRWA's 2009 General Fund, West Bank and Gaza Emergency Appeals, and the Gaza Flash Appeal. These funds helped provide food and shelter to those affected by the violence.

Through the U.S. Agency for International Development and its implementing partners on the ground in Gaza, the United States has also provided nearly \$4 million for the procurement and delivery of food, medicine and other essential items for Gazans.

We urge all parties to work together, in coordination with President Abbas and the Palestinian Authority, to support international and non-governmental organizations undertaking the large and important task of providing humanitarian

assistance and financial support in the wake of this conflict. The United States plans to fully support the planned international donor's conference to seek short-term humanitarian assistance and long-term reconstruction for the Palestinian economy. This assistance will be provided to and guided by the Palestinian Authority. We urge the international community to support this effort.

We urge all parties to ensure the secure and continuous provision of humanitarian supplies to civilians in Gaza, including allowing an increased volume of humanitarian goods through all border crossings.

We are deeply concerned by the loss of life over the past month and the pressing humanitarian needs in Gaza. We must extend a hand of opportunity to those who seek peace. As part of a lasting cease-fire, Gaza's border crossings should be open to allow the flow of aid and commerce, with an appropriate monitoring regime, with the international community and Palestinian Authority participating.

Securing lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians is a critical priority for the United States. It is for this reason that, President Obama and Secretary Clinton last week appointed Senator George Mitchell as special envoy for Middle East peace. Senator Mitchell is recognized by the country and international community for his commitment and ability to find peaceful solutions to conflict as demonstrated by his efforts to bring peace in Northern Ireland. Senator Mitchell understands the full scope of challenges we face on this arduous road towards a peaceful reconciliation.

As President Obama said last week, this administration is committed to actively and aggressively seeking a lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as Israel and its Arab neighbors. A long-term resolution of the situation in Gaza will require the restoration of legitimate Palestinian Authority control and ultimately a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this regard, we call for renewed efforts to realize the two-state solution and establish an independent and viable Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, consistent with UN Security Council Resolution 1850. Lasting peace can only be based on an enduring commitment to mutual recognition, freedom from violence, incitement, and terror.

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